



**TO: Chairman Pringle and Authority Board Members**

**FROM: Dan Leavitt, Deputy Director**

**DATE: May 6, 2010**

**RE: Altamont Corridor Rail Project - Board Briefing on Initial Alternatives  
Agenda Item 9**

The purpose of this agenda item is to inform the Board on progress made advancing the Altamont Corridor Rail Project and to recommend the initial alternatives and station locations to be considered for initial review during the alternative analysis (AA) process.

### **Project Inception**

In the Bay Area to Central Valley EIR/EIS, the Authority indicated that it would pursue a regional joint-use rail project in the Altamont Corridor as an independent project to meet a purpose and need separate from the proposed HST System, which might provide both HST compatible infrastructure and connection(s) to the Statewide HST System. This is consistent with the Metropolitan Transportation Commission *Regional Rail Plan* (adopted in 2007) which recommended that the corridor should be developed to provide regional rail service to complement both the HST statewide network as well as the Bay Area regional network. Proposition 1A identifies the Altamont Corridor as eligible for funding with high-speed rail monies and the Authority has indicated it will support development of the corridor as a "joint-use" (regional + HST) corridor with support from a regional partner. The San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission (SJRRRC) has agreed to serve as the local partner and a Working Group representing numerous regional stakeholders interested in advancing the corridor has worked with the Authority to initiate project development activities.

### **Altamont Corridor Partnership Working Group**

Through the venue of the Altamont Corridor Partnership Working Group (Working Group) the Authority has developed consensus regarding the purpose, objectives, and key features of the Altamont Corridor Rail Project. The Working Group includes a broad set of regional stakeholders:

- San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission / Altamont Commuter Express (ACE)
- Bay Area Rapid Transit District (BART)
- Metropolitan Transportation Commission
- Sacramento Area Council of

- San Mateo County Transit District / Caltrain
- Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority
- Alameda County Congestion Management Agency
- California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley
- Governments
- San Joaquin County Council of Governments
- Stanislaus County Council of Governments
- Tri Valley Policy Advisory Committee

### **San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission as Local Partner**

San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission (SJRRRC), which manages the Altamont Commuter Express (ACE) train service presently operating in the corridor, has signed a Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with the Authority to jointly develop the corridor. SJRRRC has agreed to serve as a Responsible Agency under the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and has also agreed to contribute funding for the project.

### **Linkage to Merced – Sacramento Section**

The Altamont Corridor has been defined by the Working Group to include connections to the High-Speed Train (HST) mainline east of Tracy such that compatible equipment operating through the Altamont route could potentially serve destinations along the HST mainline in the Central Valley (and vice-versa). Additionally, the SJRRRC has expressed interest in jointly pursuing both the Altamont Corridor as well as the Merced – Sacramento section with the Authority as is indicated in the MOU with the Authority. Therefore, planning activities between these two corridors have been carefully coordinated.

### **Project Goals, Objectives and Key Elements**

Goals and Objectives affirmed by the Working Group include the following:

- Develop a regional intercity passenger rail service in the Altamont Corridor linking the northern San Joaquin Valley with the Bay Area that provides dedicated trackage separate from existing lines shared with Class 1 freight operations where feasible;
- Transform the ACE corridor into a “world class” intra-regional service with frequent trains operating in both directions all day long;
- Provide connectivity and accessibility to Oakland and Oakland International Airport from the Northern San Joaquin Valley;
- The tracks will be fully separated from the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) and developed outside of the UPRR right-of-way where feasible, and,
- Connect to all regional and intercity rail passenger lines crossing the Altamont Corridor and maximize intermodal connections.

The Working Group affirmed the following key elements of the Project:

- Branch east of Tracy connecting to the high-speed system Central Valley mainline to allow operation of trains to both Stockton as well as Modesto and points beyond (from Merced to Sacramento);
- Intermodal connection to a future extension of the Dublin/Pleasanton BART line in the Tri-Valley area;

- Intermodal connection to BART in the Fremont/Union City vicinity; and,
- Accommodate a future connection to the Dumbarton rail service in the Fremont/Union City vicinity.

## Scoping

During November 2009, four public scoping meetings were held in three counties as summarized in the table below. The Altamont period opened on October 23, 2009 with distribution of the Notice of Preparation (NOP) to the State Clearinghouse; a Notice of Intent (NOI) was published in the *Federal Register* on October 29<sup>th</sup>, 2009. The comment period formally closed on December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2009.

| County             | Location          | Date              |
|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Alameda County     | City of Livermore | November 10, 2009 |
|                    | City of Fremont   | November 17, 2009 |
| San Joaquin County | City of Stockton  | November 12, 2009 |
| Santa Clara County | City of San Jose  | November 18, 2009 |

Over 200 people attended these sessions and more than 100 written comments were received including some 30 “draw your own” route maps which were provided as the initial description of the project was a general corridor rather than a specific route. The Altamont Project Team subsequently participated in the Merced – Sacramento Section Scoping Meetings in Sacramento, San Joaquin and Stanislaus Counties in January, 2010.

Given the broadly defined corridor and project goals, it is not surprising that a fair number of comments were received with “system wide” or “out of corridor” suggestions. Some of the system wide comments addressed “stopping short” at Livermore or Fremont/Union City, others recommended that the Altamont corridor should be utilized as an alternative to Pacheco Pass for the HST mainline, or conversely, that BART should be extended to the San Joaquin Valley instead of the project. Out of corridor comments included suggestions that the route should be extended to Oakland or to Walnut Creek in the East Bay as well as to San Francisco via either the Dumbarton route Hayward – San Mateo Bridge routes.

However, many of the comments and “draw your own” maps identified alignments within the corridor including nearly all of the screened program alignments identified by the Authority in the 2008 Central Valley to Bay Area EIR/S as well as other alignments which were considered but not carried into that document.

## Initial Alternatives Recommended for Consideration

In moving the project forward, it is the intention to maximize the connections with other transit modes to minimize duplication of services while achieving many of the objectives identified in the “out of corridor” comments received: E.g., intermodal connections with BART in the Tri Valley and/or Fremont / Union City vicinities provides access to the greater East Bay as well as to San Francisco. In addition, forward planning will continue to consider connections to a potential Dumbarton Rail project by Caltrain which would provide access across the Bay to the Peninsula.

Consistent with the stated objective of minimizing reliance upon UPRR facilities and rights-of-way, the Initial Alternatives have been identified parallel to but generally outside of UPRR lines and right-of-way or paralleling principal highway facilities including freeways and state routes. There are some exceptions including locations which have been identified by the UPRR as potentially for sale or where UPRR has duplicate facilities which may provide an opportunity to purchase a secondary line (provided the lost capacity can be restored on the remaining primary line).

Many of the Altamont Initial Alternatives follow the previously identified in MTC's Regional Rail Plan and the Bay Area to Central Valley Program EIR/EIS. However, in moving forward, standards appropriate to the purpose and need of the project as a complementary regional / HST corridor will be incorporated into the development of these options: E.g., a two-track alignment which will not require four-track stations will be sufficient and there are no specific HST travel time travel requirements to meet so curves can be tighter. The Initial Alternatives which have resulted from the Scoping Process have been reviewed with the Working Group and at the technical working group (TWG) meetings with comments incorporated. It is the intention to combine the most promising sub-sections which are identified through the Alternatives Analysis process into full route alternatives that will be developed and evaluated in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement / Report which will be subsequently prepared.

The Altamont Corridor is approximately 85 miles in length from Stockton to San Jose. The BNSF connector between Manteca and Escalon adds 15 route miles resulting in some 100 route miles of corridor. The alignments are depicted on a series of five maps from San Jose east to Stockton and Manteca. The attached maps show the full set of alignment options which are included in the Initial Alternatives.

#### Map 1 – Bay Area Segments

- I-880 alignment including the "Trimble" connector
- UPRR corridor (Coast Subdivision between San Jose and Newark and the Centerville line across Fremont) where ACE trains presently operate; and,
- UPRR Warm Springs Subdivision east of I-880; as well as three connectors:
- Centerville (in Fremont along existing ACE route);
- SR-237 (connecting to the existing ACE Great America station); and,
- Grimmer Connector generally north of Don Edwards National Wildlife Refuge.

There are also two routes shown connecting to Union City:

- A design option following the UPRR Niles Subdivision, and;
- An alignment following local roads which avoids the UPRR.

There are two routes connecting between the South Bay and Tri Valley:

- Niles Canyon
- I-680 – Route 84

Station options include Santa Clara Caltrain and three other options in the San Jose / Santa Clara / Milpitas area serving the heart of the high-tech employment as well as an additional five options in the Fremont / Union City vicinity.

#### Map 2 – Tri Valley Area

The Tri Valley options have been closely coordinated with work by the Bay Area Rapid Transit District (BART) to accommodate a potential intermodal with BART and ACE along an extension of the Dublin/Pleasanton line which is being pursued by BART in a parallel effort.

- Pleasanton Options – Three corridor alternatives including I-580/I-680 north of downtown and 2 railroad corridor options (active UPRR and inactive former SPRR) through town;
- Options to the South of Livermore and Pleasanton – The Route 84/Isabel option or South of Livermore options bypass Pleasanton but provide access to Livermore including candidate BART intermodal stations;
- Central Livermore – The I-580 option bypasses downtown whereas there are two design options generally following the UPRR corridor which directly access downtown (one with BART within the UPRR right-of-way and one separate from UPRR); and,
- East of Downtown Livermore – Three options extend east to Altamont Pass including I-580, a former Southern Pacific spur line and a new corridor south of the existing UPRR main line.

Station options include a stop east of Sunol near the I-680 / Route 84 interchange, four options in Pleasanton, and eight options in Livermore. All of the Livermore station locations can potentially provide an intermodal connection to BART depending upon which BART extension alternative is identified later this year.

#### Map 3 – Altamont / Tracy Area

Two general horizontal alignments across Altamont Pass – a northern route generally following I-580 and a southern route providing a more direct connection between Livermore and Tracy. Design options will be identified through the AA process taking into account profile requirements.

There are two alternatives through Tracy:

- Downtown – This alternative follows the former SPRR line through the heart of Tracy; and,

- UPRR – parallel to but outside of the UPRR Oakland Subdivision right-of-way.

#### Map 4 – Tracy/Manteca/Stockton Area

This map depicts the north branch of the Altamont wye and routes to access downtown Stockton and also shows the east connections (these are fully depicted Map 5 and described in more detail later).

- Stockton Connections – There are two alternatives near Lathrop and three to the north providing access to downtown Stockton. The option to the east and the Airport Boulevard option are outside of the UPRR right-of-way south of downtown.

A single station location is shown in downtown Stockton at the site of the existing ACE “Cabral” depot. Although UPRR has significant ownerships of land between the two parallel freight corridors, the total corridor is over 300 feet wide.

#### Map 5 – Manteca/Modesto Area

- Manteca Connections – Connections are shown to the existing Merced – Sacramento Program EIS alignment through the heart of Manteca as well as an SR-120 option connecting to the Merced – Sacramento BNSF alignment near Escalon.

There are two station options shown in the vicinity of Lathrop which are on the Altamont routes; additional station options in Manteca were identified along the Merced – Sacramento alignment options.

### **Board Recommendation**

Staff requests comment and acceptance of the proposed Initial Alternatives.

### **Attachment:**

- Initial Alternative Maps